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COLONIES AND TRADE.

No. I.

TEA FROM ASSAM.

THE Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company having sent to the Society two samples of Assamese tea, of the latest importation, the Committee of Colonies and Trade met on the 9th March, 1840, for the purpose of examining them.

The samples submitted to the Committee were marked No. 1, Souchong Assam, and No. 2, Pekoe Assam, being the produce of the indigenous plant of Assam, and they were compared with two other samples (selected for the purpose by Mr. Richard Gibbs) marked No. 3, China-plant grown in Assam, and No. 4, Oolong China tea.

Mr. Gibbs stated that having carefully tested the Assam samples of "Paho and Souchong" with those of last year's import, he had found them to possess nearly the same appearance and general qualities, with a little more fragrance and a slight improvement in the manipulation or twisting of the leaves; but that, with these exceptions, no material variation in their quality was to be traced. That, having also compared the samples of the native plant with that of the China-plant grown in Assam, he found the latter to possess all the richness,

strength, and flavour, of the very finest kinds imported from China, combining, in flavour, the finest Oolong and Padroe, with a fragrance which the native plant does not possess.

It will be seen by the evidence in the Report of the Committee on the samples of last year, that the imperfection in the flavour of the native Assam plant was mainly ascribed to over-heating. Mr. Gibbs is of opinion that, in the comparison of the indigenous plant with the Chinese plant grown on the same soil and manufactured by the same process in Assam, much of the superiority of the latter is to be ascribed to the care with which it has been cultivated for the express purpose of comparison, the leaves having been gathered while *young*; whereas the samples of the native plant bear evidence of indiscriminate gathering, the plants, from age and want of proper culture, having become coarse and devoid of fragrance.

Mr. Gibbs pronounced that the over-burnt flavour in Nos. 1 and 2 was nearly as strong as in that of last year, and that he considered No. 3 equal to the finest China Souchong.

Mr. Twining.—The Souchong, No. 1, is very like that of last year, having still much of the burnt flavour. No. 2 has a little of the Pekoe flavour; No. 3 is the finest in flavour; but Nos. 1 and 2 would be more generally useful if improved in the manufacture.

Mr. Hunter.—No. 1 is a good strong tea, and is a great improvement on the sample of last year. No. 2 possesses a strong Pekoe flavour, is also much improved, and is likely to become a favourite with the public. No. 3 is a good tea, but No. 4 has decidedly a more aromatic flavour.

Mr. Thompson. — No. 1 is superior in flavour and manipulation to that of last year, though still requiring more care in the manipulation. No. 2 is a Pekoe tea, so much improved as to be very nearly equal to the Pekoe from China. The appearance of the flower of this tea differs from that of China, this being yellow, while the Chinese is white. The quality of the tea is good, and the preparation exceeds any expectation that could have been formed of improvement in so short a time. The sample of the tea from the China-plant grown in Assam has a richer and fuller flavour than either of the two first; it ranges with the highest class of “Souchong Congos,” but, from the inferior manipulation of its leaf, it will not, this market, reach the price of the Paho.

Mr. Bland.—In the sample, No. 1, there is more of crude flavour (which is always a fault) than in some other packages of the same importation. Both this sample and No. 2 have much less of the earthy flavour than those of the earliest importation; and there is a higher developement of the soft, full, and fragrant properties of the leaves.

There is still, however, a burnt flavour which may be, in some measure, diminished by exposure to the atmosphere, and the leaves appear to be in a very mature state.

There has been considerable progressive improvement in each year's importation. No. 3 is a peculiar tea of a high, ripe caper flavour, and resembles the tea of the Ankoi district; its strength and ripe aromatic flavour are unequalled by those of any other kind. It is entirely different from Souchong, its flavour being of a brisk, ripe, and brilliant character, and that of the Souchong soft and mellow.

The old-fashioned Caper tea, which it so much resembles, has not been seen in England for the last ten or

fifteen years, but we have lately got a few chests of Oolong bearing hard upon it.

From the whole of the evidence it appears that there has been a progressive improvement both in the manufacture and flavour of the native Assamese teas ; and the success of the experiment of growing the China-plant in Assam more especially points out the probability of still greater improvement in the tea of the native plant, which has hitherto been under the disadvantage of greater age and indiscriminate gathering.

Therefore, it may reasonably be inferred that the country possesses every requisite of soil and climate for producing teas of the finest quality.

No. II.

TEA FROM BRAZIL.

FIVE samples of tea, grown and manufactured in the province of St. Paul, in Brazil, having been sent to the Society for examination, by direction of Viscount Palmerston, the Committee, to whom the subject was referred, met on the 27th April, 1840, for the purpose of investigating the qualities of the samples.

A sixth sample of tea, grown in the Imperial Botanic Garden at Rio Janeiro, was received at the Foreign Office,